

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Jan. 4, 2008

Contact:

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WHEN: Monday, Jan. 7, 12-1 p.m.

WHERE: Kennan Institute at the Woodrow Wilson Center for Scholars, Sixth Floor, Ronald Reagan Building and International Trade Center, One Woodrow Wilson Plaza, 1300 Pennsylvania Ave., N.W., Washington, D.C.

NOTE: A Photo ID is required for entry into the building.

RSVP: communications@uscirf.gov

The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom and the Kennan Institute at the Woodrow Wilson Center for Scholars are co-sponsoring a presentation on the Putin government's responses to increased xenophobia in Russia. The event features a talk by Aleksandr Verkhovsky, the director of the Moscow-based SOVA Center, on Monday, Jan. 7, from 12 to 1 p.m.

The SOVA Center has emerged as one of Russia's leading non-governmental organizations focusing on xenophobia and freedom of religion or belief in Russia. Mr. Verkhovsky will address recent amendments to the anti-extremism law as well as hate crimes. USCIRF Senior Policy

Analyst Catherine Cosman will comment on Mr. Verkhovsky's talk.

In its most recent Policy Focus report on Russia, the Commission has analyzed the harsh impact of political authoritarianism, rising nationalism, officially tolerated xenophobia and intolerance, and the sometimes arbitrary official response to domestic security concerns on human rights in Russia. Those trends are having a particularly severe impact on Russia's Muslims and other religious and ethnic minorities. Last year, the Commission also published an extensive analysis of the impact of Russia's new law regulating NGOs. The Commission's policy recommendations to the U.S. government have included urging the Russian government to establish a nationwide anti-discrimination body, work with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) to decrease hate crimes, and ensure the equal legal treatment of the members of religious minorities. For more information, see <http://www.uscifr.gov/countries/publications/policyfocus/Russia.pdf>

The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom was created by the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998 to monitor the status of freedom of thought, conscience, and religion or belief abroad, as defined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and related international instruments, and to give independent policy recommendations to the President, the Secretary of State and the Congress.

Michael C.

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